

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2019

The Honorable L. Francis Cissna
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
111 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20529

Dear Director Cissna:

On behalf of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, we are writing to request a meeting with you regarding various concerning policies that have been implemented since your appointment at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Specifically, we are concerned that actions under your leadership may be hindering the ability of our constituents and others throughout both our country and world to receive fair, efficient adjudications.

A host of factors, including application rates, contribute to USCIS case processing delays.¹ Policy decisions made at your agency, however, are unnecessarily compounding delays for families, vulnerable individuals and U.S. businesses. For example, the decision to rescind a policy that formerly allowed adjudicators to give deference to previous approvals of employer-based petitions with the same position and employer has caused businesses to suffer as they wait for their employees to receive final approval. Extreme vetting procedures for these and all other immigration applications that add additional screening programs and initiatives have only burdened your agency and applicants. We continue to wait for evidence that they are truly effective and necessary for national security reasons. Our district offices and local organizations point to the increase in unnecessary and duplicative requests for evidence (RFEs) that lead to additional weeks, months, or even years of wait times for constituents and clients.

Your agency's actions have also raised concerns that USCIS now functions as an extension of President Trump's immigration enforcement regime instead of a service-oriented agency devoted to processing immigration benefits for those deserving of them. Your "Notice to Appear" policy for those whose applications and petitions are denied as well as your new policy against foreign students and visitors who unintentionally commit minor status violations will lead individuals eager to contribute to the United States socially and economically into deportation proceedings instead. Additionally, we remain extremely troubled over reports of arrests of spouses who appear in your field offices as they apply for legal permanent residency². Instead of focusing on processing cases fairly and efficiently, your agency appears concentrated on diverting as many applicants and petitioners as possible into the hands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

¹ American Immigration Lawyers Association Policy Brief. Doc. No. 19012834. <https://www.aila.org/infonet/aila-policy-brief-uscis-processing-delays>

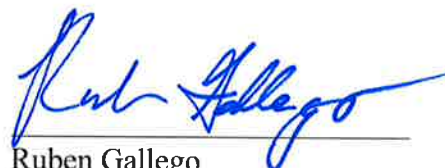
² <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/03/politics/undocumented-immigrants-arrests-marriage-interview/index.html>

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus stands ready to find and recommend ways to make agency processes more efficient and to reduce the case backlog. We will not, however, stand idly by as we watch deserving constituents and others throughout this country be systematically excluded from immigration benefits in the United States for which they qualify. We hope you will find time in the coming weeks to meet with our members and collaboratively discuss what your agency is capable of achieving.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro
CHC Chairman



Ruben Gallego
CHC First Vice-Chair



Nanette Diaz Barragan
CHC Second Vice-Chair



Adriano Espaillat
CHC Whip



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CHC Freshman Representative



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